

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

PAYING TRIBUTE TO MARSHA MCELLIGOTT

HON. MAURICE D. HINCHEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2005

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a dear member of my staff, Marsha McElligott, who will soon retire after nearly 31 years of service to the House of Representatives. I have been fortunate enough to work with Marsha since I was sworn into office in January of 1993, but that was not the beginning of her congressional career. In fact, nearly her entire working life has been devoted to public service.

After graduating from the Katharine Gibbs School, she went to work for my predecessor in representing this district, Congressman Matthew McHugh. She served as his assistant in the Ithaca city prosecutor's office, in the Tompkins County District Attorney's office and then in his private law practice. When Matt was elected to Congress in 1974, she joined him as a caseworker on his staff and stayed through his retirement in 1992. I am very grateful to have inherited her service when I was elected in 1993.

Most of the people in Ithaca, where she's worked for all 31 years, would be surprised to learn that she's never lived in the congressional district. Rather, she's lived all of her life in Watkins Glen, in a neighboring county. It's remarkable for the fact that her knowledge of the communities of this congressional district is so deep and her work has always been so seamless that I think most of my constituents would assume that she had, in fact, been an Ithaca native.

Her service is also unusual in that she has devoted so many years to two members of Congress, Matt McHugh and myself. While we undoubtedly have different styles and have run our congressional offices in different manners, Marsha never missed a beat when she came to work for me, and I doubt that constituents who had received her help ever noticed any transition. They only noticed how very well served they were in her hands.

A congressional career that spans more than 30 years has become very rare, and I fear that there are few Marsha McElligotts left in congressional employment, staff members who are so deeply, personally dedicated to serving the public, serving the Members for whom they work, and upholding the very best goals and ideals of this institution.

I've always said that being a caseworker is the hardest job in a congressional office—it's demanding, it's stressful, and it requires infinite patience and persistence. It takes a very special person to do that job well and for such a long time. I can think of no finer embodiment of these qualities than Marsha McElligott. She has true respect for the role of Congress and for the difference that an individual Member can make in the lives of his or her constituents by providing access to the halls of government.

Like many of our longest-serving and most dedicated staff, Marsha has been relatively anonymous. Constituents may remember for decades the name of the Member of Congress who helped them earn their citizenship, or get their veterans' benefits, or solve a problem with the IRS, but they probably won't remember the name of the staff member who helped them.

That anonymity is a testament to how deeply dedicated to the greater good that Marsha, and staffers like her, truly are. I offer it as a compliment. Some people who work in a public service position for a long time come to be known for their own personalities and their own political careers. For Marsha, her devotion has been to Congressman McHugh and me and to the people of the congressional district. She has been utterly selfless, subsuming her own opinions to be instead the voice of the members of Congress she has served and working always for the good of our constituents, not her own personal gain. Because she is always the picture of discretion, she has the unflinching trust of our constituents, my staff and me.

There are thousands of people in the congressional district I represent—immigrants and new citizens, college students, veterans, people with disabilities, young, old, rich and poor—whose lives have been bettered by the efforts of Marsha McElligott. Marsha's a very modest person, but I believe there's no exaggeration in saying that she's made a difference in the future of our nation, because of her particular devotion to two areas of her work: bringing new citizens into our country and helping to select the finest leaders of our armed forces.

For hundreds of refugees, visa applicants, or those needing help with the naturalization process, Marsha's patience and compassion has meant the difference between hope and despair, success and failure, united or divided families. The long and exhausting process these special cases require have proven no match for Marsha's limitless diligence and desire to serve those in need of help. Many of these cases were presented by people who didn't speak English or didn't know our customs, people who were scared and intimidated. She made a good introduction to these people of what America was all about, and what American government means in the lives of individuals. People who were frightened by the immigration process when they came to our offices were reassured by her direct personal contact, her no-nonsense attitude and the confidence she inspired that she'd sort out whatever sort of bureaucratic mess they were in. A generation of immigrants to the Finger Lakes region from all over the world became citizens because of her.

Hundreds of young men and women seeking appointments to the nation's military academies also have Marsha to thank for their entry into these elite institutions. Marsha's ability to coach these future leaders of our armed forces successfully through the nomination process is worthy of great admiration and praise.

I could go on and on about her professional accomplishments, but I want to close by saying what she has meant to me personally. She has been a pleasure to know and to work with, and I've relied on her wisdom and experience in these 13 years more times than I can count. Day in and day out, she has regularly, faithfully and loyally provided the very best service any Member of Congress could hope for, for more than three decades. I congratulate her as she prepares for this new chapter of her life and know that her husband David, their children and families look forward to spending more time with her.

RECOGNIZING THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE NEVADA COMMISSION ON TOURISM

HON. JON C. PORTER

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 13, 2005

Mr. PORTER. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with my colleagues, Congresswoman SHELLEY BERKELEY and Congressman JIM GIBBONS, to recognize the significant contributions of the Nevada Commission on Tourism in leading the United States in tourism marketing and promotion in China.

Since 2002, the Nevada Commission on Tourism has been instrumental in collaborating with Chinese officials to strengthen international ties with this burgeoning tourist economy. The Nevada Commission on Tourism is the first U.S. tourism entity at any government level to be granted a license by the Chinese government to advertise its tourism attractions to prospective Chinese tourists. All of this was achieved in less than 1 year and with minimal costs to taxpayers.

The result of their efforts has not solely benefited the State of Nevada, but has encouraged tourism to all parts of the United States. Statistically, Chinese tourism to the United States has increased by 20 percent from 2003 to 2004, when Nevada was able to achieve its licensing goals. Therefore, through their innovative efforts, the Nevada Commission on Tourism has paved the way for other States to actively participate in marketing to this uniquely lucrative economy.

We are encouraged by the tremendous growth in Chinese tourism and we recognize that there is fertile ground in this burgeoning international travel and tourism market. Further, we are optimistic that other states will follow Nevada's lead and actively begin to market travel and tourism to China, the world's largest market place.

Mr. Speaker, again, we applaud the uniquely monumental efforts of the Nevada Commission on Tourism and look forward to witnessing an even greater increase in Chinese tourism to our State and other tourist destinations throughout the United States.

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